

SAVE THE FOALS



These foals, out of grade mares and by a good Belgian sire, were raised by Ira Price of Auglaize County in 1936.

By L. P. McCANN

Extension Specialist in Animal Husbandry
The Ohio State University

SAVE THE FOALS



USE GOOD BREEDING STOCK

Many of the mares bred each year never bring forth living foals. Carelessness, improper feeding, and lack of attention at foaling time are responsible for much of this failure.

If it is possible to choose the mares that you expect to breed select, as far as possible, those that are low-set, drafty, compact, and heavily muscled. Sound and correct underpinning is of special importance, and cannot receive too much consideration. Such mares mated to a stallion of excellent draft type having proper underpinning, will produce horses that will bring the highest price on commercial markets.

Should a mare be bred at two years of age, or is it better to wait until she is three years old? One answer to this question appears on page 3. However, there are those who will differ with this answer, and properly so. If mares have been well developed and have made good growth up to two years of age they may be bred to foal at three. Such mares should never be forced into hard work while they are nursing their foals at three years of age. This first nursing period is a heavy drain on the vitality of such mares and may prevent them from ever reaching their maximum weight and development. Mares that have not made good growth during their first two years should not be bred before they are three years old.

There is an old saying that the sire is half the herd, but there is also another trite expression to the effect that a poor sire is all of the herd. The right kind of a stallion for producing good draft colts should be blocky, low-set, and compact. The leggy, upstanding, narrow, shallow bodied kind, commonly referred to as "cherry pickers," should be avoided.

Saving a few dollars in service fee is false economy if the stallion is not of the correct type, or, if he does not sire colts that are sound and of the right type.

Good feet and legs are the first essentials in a good draft animal. "No foot, no horse" is well worth remembering, if useful horses that have a high sale value are to be produced. If the stallion is to sire colts with proper underpinning, he should have legs that are squarely placed under his body, and feet that are of good size with the proper slope of hoof-wall, and with wide, open heels. Narrow, contracted heels with stubby pasterns frequently lead to unsoundnesses. Soundness is the most important item in determining the value of horses. Therefore, stallions that are known to regularly reproduce unsoundness in their offspring should not be patronized by mare owners who want to produce sound horses.

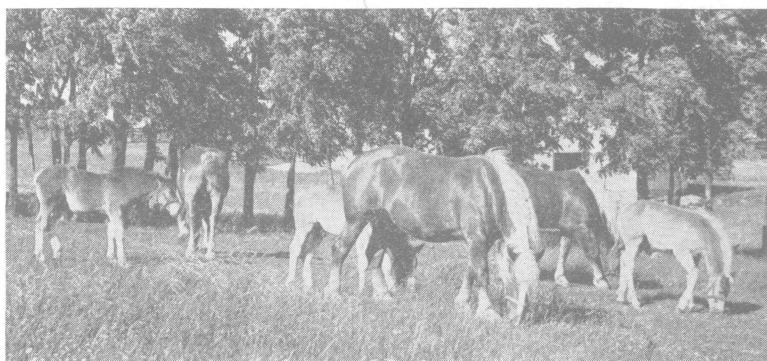
CARE OF THE BROOD MARE BEFORE FOALING

Idleness or Overwork Bad.—Idleness is one of the greatest dangers to a mare just before foaling, and it should be avoided if at all possible. Many of the purebred horse breeders in Ohio follow the practice of working their mares

right up to the time of foaling, and they believe that this results in stronger, healthier foals, with less difficulty at foaling time than when the mares are allowed to remain idle.

If it is impossible to have steady work of a light nature just prior to foaling the mare should not be allowed to stand in the stall, but should be turned in a lot or out to pasture where she can have ample opportunity for exercise. A roomy boxstall with plenty of bedding is a very satisfactory place for the mare at night, but in the daytime she should be out-of-doors. Under no circumstances should a mare be confined to an ordinary tie-stall just before foaling.

But overwork may be as dangerous as idleness. When a mare is within a few weeks of foaling time she should not be (1) pulled too hard, (2) allowed to wade through deep mud, (3) made to back heavy loads, or (4) overworked in any way. By avoiding these dangers, the horseman may have a healthy mare and foal, while ignoring them may result in a dead foal and a sick, or perhaps permanently injured, mare.



SHOULD MARES BE BRED AT TWO YEARS OF AGE?

Three-year-old Belgian mares and their foals owned by E. H. Campbell & Son, Salem, Ohio. Center foreground is Belle De Camielle, first prize two-year-old and Reserve Junior Champion, 1935 Ohio State Fair. The other mares, left and right, were second and seventh, respectively, in the same class.

Clean the Boxstall.—Before placing the mare in the boxstall for foaling, it should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in order to guard against navel ill. Any of the standard coal-tar preparations will be satisfactory for this disinfectant work, and they should be applied according to directions accompanying the product.

Feeding the Mare.—Moldy or dusty feeds, if fed to the mare when in foal, may cause an abortion. For this reason such feeds should be carefully avoided. At this time bulky feeds should make up a large proportion of the ration, and legume hay such as good alfalfa or clover will answer the purpose very satisfactorily.

Some farmers and horsemen are prejudiced against alfalfa hay for horses at any time, preferring to have timothy instead, for both the brood

mare and the foal. However, for the brood mare, legume hay or a good quality mixed hay is more satisfactory than timothy. Corn stover of good quality can also be used to supply part of the roughage for brood mares.

For the concentrates in the ration, oats and corn may be used together, but some bran should be fed at the approach of foaling. If the mare is kept at light work, she should have 12 to 14 quarts of grain daily, but along with it should also be given 15 to 18 pounds of roughage.

FOALING TIME

When it is known that foaling time is near, a close watch should be kept on the mare so that assistance can be rendered in case of necessity. One of the signs which seldom fails to indicate foaling within a few hours is the relaxing of the muscles at either side of the tail. The condition of the udder should also be closely watched at this stage, for it will give unmistakable signs of the nearness of foaling. It is a wise precaution to visit the mare in her stall at least once or twice during the night. Such visits often save foals and occasionally save the life of the mare.

After foaling, the mare should receive a light feed of bran and oats for the first meal, and for a few days her ration should be cut down but increased again as her condition warrants. Occasionally, when a mare is a heavy milker, the ration needs to be kept low for several days. At the end of four or five days she can be turned to pasture and in ten days or two weeks, under normal conditions, she can again be put to work.

THE FOAL

Care of the Navel.—As soon as possible after the foal arrives treat the navel cord with tincture of iodine. One application should be enough, according to Dr. E. A. Caslick, in charge of breeding sanitation at Claibourne Stud, Paris, Kentucky, who says: "The navel cord on the newborn foal can be very much over-treated. Nature meant that the stub of the cord should dry up, and the application of too much antiseptic interferes with the normal process."

If the navel is slow to heal after this treatment an antiseptic dusting powder may be used. Such a powder can be made up by your druggist with equal parts of alum, starch, and gum camphor. At the first signs of "navel ill" or "joint disease" call your veterinarian, and follow his instructions carefully. The slightest delay may mean the loss of your colt.

Constipation and Diarrhea.—In the newly-born foal the condition of the bowels should be watched very closely and at the first signs of constipation steps should be taken to correct the condition. An injection of warm soapy water, using from 1 to 2 quarts of liquid, should correct a condition of this kind. The treatment should be repeated until satisfactory results are secured. Some horsemen prefer a mixture of glycerine and warm water for this purpose. The mixture should be made up of 2 ounces of glycerine in 1 quart of warm water. If the injection does not correct matters give castor oil as directed for diarrhea.

When the foal is from seven to nine days old it may be troubled with diarrhea, because at this particular time the mare usually develops foal heat. Scours of this kind in the foal may be treated in several ways, but castor oil is one of the best. The usual dose is 4 to 5 ounces. Give the oil as a drench, warming it enough so that it will run out of the bottle readily. When scours develop in the foal, the mare's feed should be cut down for a day or two until this condition is corrected. If she is a free milker, milk out part of the udder. Keep the colt out of the hot sun and keep it quiet while it is suffering from diarrhea.

During the busy work season when the mare comes in from the field hot and sweaty, it is a good practice not to let the colt nurse for at least ten minutes. Give the mare a chance to cool off first, and, if she is extremely hot, strip her udder out before letting the colt nurse. Precautions of this kind are especially important with young foals.



GOOD BREEDING STOCK PAYS!

Belgian brood mares and stallions on the farm of Charles A. Wentz & Sons, Upper Sandusky, Ohio. "Ivondale Farceur," International Grand Champion, on the extreme right.

Feeding the Foal.—Like all other young animals, the colt makes his cheapest gains during early life and especially in the period while still nursing. For this reason, it is important that the colt be taught to eat grain at the earliest possible age. If he is in pasture, a creep can be constructed through which he can get to a feed box of his own. If kept in the stall, a separate feed box should be erected at a convenient height so that he can eat without being molested by the mare.

If the mare is in the same stall with the colt, she should be tied up at the time he is being fed to prevent her from taking his feed.

Following are some grain mixtures that will prove satisfactory for young foals under the above conditions:

1. Oats 2 parts, bran 1 part, by measure.
2. Crushed oats 2 parts, cracked or shelled corn 2 parts, and bran 1 part.
3. Shelled corn and whole oats equal parts.

Oats make an excellent feed for foals. Corn is frowned upon by some but used extensively by many other successful horsemen. Other feeds not mentioned here may be used to tempt the foal's appetite, and to get him in the habit of eating. Legume hay is an important item in all horse feeding, but it is of especial value to the foal and young growing horse because of the protein it supplies for body building. Alfalfa hay and soybean hay are the best of the legumes and should be used more extensively than they are at present.

Good pasture is an important factor with growing foals. In addition to the value of pasture as a feed for the colt it provides the necessary exercise to keep him clean and sound in his legs. During the short grass and fly months of July, August, and September, it is wise to give foals access to a darkened stall in the daytime, but even during this period they are much better off if they are allowed out-of-doors at night. These practices help materially in preventing foals from losing their baby fat.

It is unwise economy to starve a colt during its first year, because growing gains are the cheapest gains; it is particularly important that the young colt have all the grain he will clean up. At 12 months of age, a good draft colt should weigh at least one-half as much as it will weigh at maturity. Feeding is largely the determining factor in this matter of weight and gains during the first year.

Weaning the Foal.—Before the colt is weaned it should be thoroughly accustomed to eating grain and some hay, so that there is little or no setback when it is taken away from the mare.

The common practice in weaning draft colts is to take them off the mare between four and six months of age. If the mare is working every day, the colt is usually weaned at a younger age than if the mare is idle or not doing heavy work. The cheapest gains are made during the suckling period, and for this reason, it is wise to prolong the nursing period as much as possible.

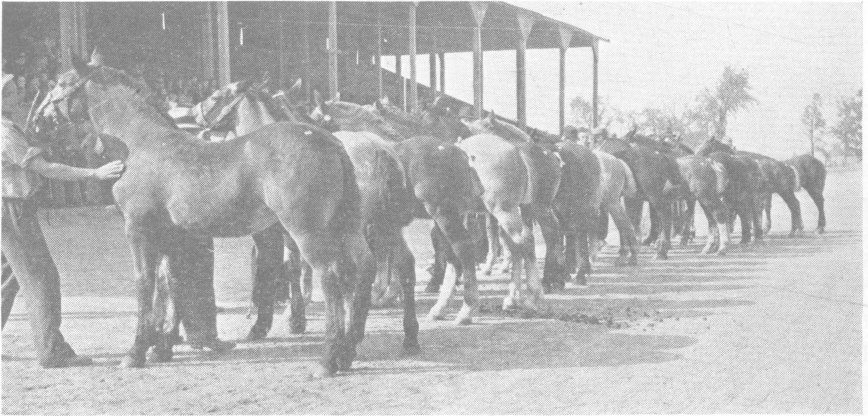
Foals may be weaned by separating them from the mare and not allowing the two to come together again until the weaning process is completed. At this time it is well to watch the mare's udder. If she is producing a heavy flow of milk, it is a good practice to partially milk out the udder once or twice a day for three or four days. At this period the mare's feed should be reduced for a few days until the milk flow ceases. Apply camphorated oil to the udder and teats before milking each time. This will aid in milking and also prevent chapping.

Leading and Training the Foal.—If colts are handled to some extent while young, they can be more easily trained to lead. However, this early handling is not always possible, and under such circumstances, teaching a foal to lead, when it has grown to the age of three to six months, sometimes becomes a tough job.

When we try to lead a foal by pulling on the halter his natural tendency is to pull backward. If another simple device is used, in addition to the halter and lead strap, the average foal can be taught to lead with a great saving of time and temper on the part of both man and foal.

Take a piece of very light rope or sash cord, 12 to 15 feet long. Tie a small loop or fasten a ring at one end. Pass the free end through this to make a large loop. Working from the side, lay this loop across his loin and gradually work one side of it back over the croup and tail until it comes to rest in about the same position as the breeching of a set of harness. The other side of the loop still rests on the loin in front of the hips, with the free end of the rope passing forward along the back and shoulder until it can be held with the lead strap.

To start the colt, give a light pull on the halter strap and a much firmer pull on the rope. This pressure across the rear quarters will usually bring the desired results. In most cases, one or two lessons of 10 to 15 minutes with the rope will be all that is needed.



COLT SHOWS ATTRACT WIDE ATTENTION

Line-up of grade horse colts in the 1938 District Colt Show at Attica, Ohio, sponsored by the Seneca County Horse Breeders' Association.

The colt should be taught to perform on the lead strap at both the walk and the trot, always keeping him on the right side of the leader, having your right hand close to the halter on the lead strap. Have someone trail the colt so that he will learn to move off promptly. In turning, teach the foal to turn away from the leader and not toward him.

Teach him to pose and stand quietly for inspection. In placing the colt for inspection, be sure that his front feet are on higher ground than his hind feet—never stand a colt or a horse with its head downhill. See that all four feet are placed squarely under the colt and teach him to hold his head in a normal position. If the colt is allowed to stretch, getting the hind feet too far back, this may cause him to show low in the back, and if the head is held too high the same defect may show up. Study the conformation of your colt and figure out the exact position in which he should be posed in order to show off to best advantage.

Colts should always be shown with full mane and foretop. Clipping may seem to improve the looks of a colt at the time, but when the hair begins to

grow out, it gives the colt a ragged appearance and lowers his sale value. At all large fairs and shows, colts are exhibited without any such clipping.

Care of the Foal's Feet.—Watch the colt's hoofs and keep them trimmed in such a way as to avoid faulty development. When the side or the toe of the hoof is allowed to grow out too long, this puts an undue strain on certain tendons and may lead to bad conformation of legs or unsoundness. Examine the feet of colts and young horses regularly and keep them trimmed so as to insure even and proper growth.

FEEDING AFTER WEANING

Colt feeding experiments conducted at a few agricultural experiment stations indicate that colts, fed a moderate grain ration and all the alfalfa hay and oat straw they will eat the first and second winters after weaning, were in better condition for work than colts fed heavier grain rations and the same roughage. All colts had free run of pasture during the summers, and of an inexpensive shed shelter during the winters. But they seldom used this shelter, even in bad weather.

By moderate grain feeding is meant about 6 pounds daily of a mixture made of 2 parts of ground corn, 2 parts of ground oats, and 1 part of wheat bran by weight. By heavier grain rations is meant, say, 8 or 9 pounds daily of such a mixture during the first winter after weaning, and about 12 pounds daily during the second winter after weaning.

The colts receiving the heavier grain ration were about 100 pounds heavier at 3 years of age and commanded from \$15 to \$55 better prices. But the colts receiving the 6 pounds grain ration were in better physical condition, stood working better, and when 5 years old weighed practically the same as their mates that had received the heavier grain rations. The colts receiving 6 pounds of grain remained cleaner in their underpinning than the colts receiving the heavier grain ration.

INTERNAL PARASITES

"Internal parasites rank as first offenders to the normal growth of colts and young horses." This is the statement of a noted authority on horse production. In the recent bot and parasite control campaigns carried out in various Ohio counties there has been a tendency on the part of many horse owners to neglect the treatment of colts foaled the preceding season. The common opinion on this point is that such colts could not possibly be infested like older horses, therefore they need not be treated. However, on farms where several colts have been treated for the first time the result in one or more instances has invariably been astounding.

Give the foals a chance by having them treated for internal parasites during the first winter of their lives.